



LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

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[Florida Panthers Foundation assures eye care services for low-income children.](#)

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Happy New Year to all.

2018 was an exciting year for Miami Lighthouse, and 2019 promises even more new initiatives to our fast expanding Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™. On December 17th we celebrated the dedication of the Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family Playground, with the announcement during the ceremony of the Nielson Family's \$1 million gift to our Lighthouse Learning Center to fund a major classroom expansion.



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony from left to right: Olga Nielson and Board Director Charles J. Nielson, Mary Spencer, President and CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Chair Louis Nostro, Mayor Carlos Gimenez, Jorge Munilla, Commissioner Sally Heyman, Board Director Alex Suarez, School Board Member Dr. Marta Perez

The new playground will provide a creative and safe outdoor environment for our youngsters whose enrollment in three years has quadrupled from 15 students to 60 in the upcoming academic year. Attendees included Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez, Commissioner Sally Heyman, Schoolboard Member Dr. Marta Perez, President of MCM Jorge Munilla, MCM Project Executive and Miami Lighthouse Board Director Alex Suarez, along with other city and county government officials and important members of the business community. The program also featured a musical performance by our pre-school students, each of whom received a Braille story book, a holiday gift donated by the Saul & Theresa Esman Foundation.



Special musical performance by Lighthouse Learning Center Pre-K Students

Florida Panthers Foundation assures eye care services for low-income children.

"We are delighted to be partnering with the Florida Panthers Foundation to improve the quality of vision services for thousands of needy students," says Virginia Jacko, President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse. The initial gift of \$25,000 will be used to enhance the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program and will support the upgrading of one of Miami Lighthouse's four mobile eye-care units to increase capacity, upgrade equipment, and decrease the waiting time of children awaiting eye examinations.

The Heiken mobile vision units travel across Florida with licensed optometrists who donate their time and services to examine students from low income families. The renovated mobile unit will have its exterior wrapped with the Florida Panthers logo and mascot, Stanley C. Panther, to increase its appeal to young students.

The gift was officially presented during a Florida Panthers game at the BB&T Center in Sunrise when the Panthers faced off against the Chicago Blackhawks. During the game a moving video about Monica, one of our Heiken Program glasses recipients, was shown which can be viewed [here](#).



Stanley C. Panther presents check on behalf of the Florida Panthers Foundation to Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program glasses recipient Monica, President and CEO Virginia Jacko and Vice President for External Relations Cameron Sisser

Contributed by Joan Spector

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